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 ACTION OCS-06

INFO	LOG-00	AMAD-01	ARA-01	CA-02	CIAE-00	OASY-00	DODE-00
	DS-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	JUSE-00	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	SCT-03	SS-00	VO-06	ASDS-01	DSCC-00	/021W
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1073

RELEASED IN FULL

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 004772

DEPT FOR EMR

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PREL, PTER, ASEC, AR

SUBJECT: BOMBING IN BUENOS AIRES: CONSULAR PERSPECTIVE

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 4685; (B) BUENOS AIRES 4694;
 (C) BUENOS AIRES 4711; (D) BUENOS AIRES 4758

1. ON JULY 18, SOON AFTER TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE ARGENTINE ISRAELI MUTUAL ASSOCIATION (AMIA), CONOFF AND CONASST (ARMED WITH A COMPUTERIZED PRINT-OUT OF REGISTERED AMCITS LIVING IN THE AREA) VISITED HOSPITALS, JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER AND BOMB SITE TO SEARCH FOR AMCITS INJURED IN A LARGELY JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD IN DOWNTOWN BUENOS AIRES, AND TO OFFER ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE. WHILE CONSULAR PERSONNEL WERE VISITING AREA HOSPITALS, OTHER CONSULAR STAFF WERE CHECKING LISTS OF

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 DEAD, INJURED, AND MISSING OBTAINED FROM BOTH OFFICIAL AND NON OFFICIAL SOURCES AGAINST CONSULAR REGISTRATION LISTS. TO DATE, EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO INFORMATION INDICATING THAT THERE WERE ANY AMCITS AMONG THOSE KILLED, INJURED OR MISSING IN THE BLAST.

2. AT HOSPITAL CLINICAS, ONE OF THE CITY'S MAJOR HOSPITALS WHERE MANY OF THE INJURED TAKEN, CONOFF ATTEMPTED TO LOCATE ONE OF THOSE INJURED WHOSE SURNAME CORRESPONDED WITH A LOCAL AMCIT FAMILY REGISTERED WITH

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THE CONSULATE. THE DIRECTOR OF THE HOSPITAL CONFIRMED THAT WHILE THE PATIENT WAS ADMITTED THE STAFF COULD NOT LOCATE HIM. THE HOSPITAL DID NOT HAVE A COMPUTERIZED CHECK-IN SYSTEM. CONOFF AND ASS'T TOURED EVERY SECTION FROM TRAUMA TO THE MORGUE IN SEARCH OF THE PATIENT. AT LAST CONTACT, THE HOSPITAL HAD CLOSE TO TEN UNIDENTIFIED DEAD VICTIMS.

3. A VISIT TO ANOTHER NEARBY HOSPITAL TURNED UP THE AMCITS FAMILY WAITING FOR ANOTHER INJURED ARGENTINE RELATIVE. FAMILY INDICATED THAT THE MISSING PATIENT WHO WAS NOT AN AMCIT HAD BEEN RELEASED AND HAD RETURNED HOME. THIS FAMILY REPORTED THAT THEY KNEW OF NO AMCITS WHO WERE INJURED OR KILLED. THEY EXPRESSED THEIR GRATITUDE AT THE EMBASSY'S OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE.

4. CONSULAR PERSONNEL THEN VISITED A COMMUNITY CENTER, TWO BLOCKS FROM THE BOMB SITE WHICH WAS STRUGGLING TO COORDINATE INFORMATION AND PROVIDING CARE AND CLOTHING FOR RESIDENTS AFFECTED BY THE BLAST. CONOFF PASSED U.S. EMB'S CONDOLENCES AND OFFER OF ASSISTANCE TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE AMIA, EZRA ZEITUNE. CONOFF ASKED TO BE UNCLASSIFIED

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KEPT INFORMED RE: AMCITS. MR. ZEITUNE CALLED LATER TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF THOSE MISSING, NONE OF WHOM APPEAR TO BE AMCITS.

5. CONOFF AND CONASST THEN VISITED SITE OF BLAST TO CHECK ON WHEREABOUTS OF AMCITS LIVING DIRECTLY ACROSS THE STREET FROM BOMB SITE. AT THE TIME OF CONOFF'S VISIT, THERE APPEARED TO BE NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY DIRECTING THE EVACUATIONS, MEDICAL CARE, POLICE PROTECTION, OR RESCUE EFFORTS. CONOFF WAS PERMITTED ENTRY ONLY BECAUSE THE POLICE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF A CHECKPOINT RECOGNIZED CONOFF AS THE ONE WHO GAVE HIM HIS VISA.

6. THE SCENE WAS CHAOTIC. THE SEVEN STORY AMIA CENTER WAS LEVELED TO THE GROUND. SURROUNDING BUILDINGS REMAINED STRUCTURALLY INTACT BUT ALL SUFFERED EXTERNAL DAMAGE. WINDOWS AND DOORS WERE BLOWN OUT OF BUILDINGS. A POLICE OFFICER WHO APPEARED TO BE IN CHARGE SAID THAT ALL RESIDENTS ON THE BLOCK WHERE THE AMCITS LIVED HAD BEEN EVACUATED. HOWEVER, CONOFF COULD NOT FIND ANY CENTRAL RE-LOCATION SITE, NOR A LIST OF WHERE THOSE EVACUATED HAD BEEN SENT. AMID THE STRONG ODOR OF

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NATURAL GAS AND BYSTANDERS IGNORING WARNINGS NOT TO SMOKE, CONOFF AND CONASST DECIDED FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO LOCATE AMCITS LIVING IN THE AREA WOULD BE UNWISE AND RETURNED TO EMBASSY.

7. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO COORDINATE WITH THE AMIA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO LOCATE AMCITS AFFECTED BY THE BLAST AND OFFER WHATEVER ASSISTANCE POSSIBLE.

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